

Mr. Woolliams: Is the government to blame?

Mr. Dinsdale: The hon. member for Calgary North (Mr. Woolliams) asks if the government is to blame. Just look at the rapid rise in government expenditures and I think you will see where the main problem lies.

While the motion emphasizes legislative solutions I think we all agree that what is required is skill and sensitivity in human relations, along with goodwill and good faith which can only be produced by improved working conditions which help to relieve the monotony of the assembly line approach to modern industry, introducing repetitive monotony into the manufacturing process, and in particular a sense of community.

The government in its statements thus far today has adopted simplistic solutions. Always under pressure, the government feigns a flurry of action. As has been noted by previous speakers, there have been several announcements, as reported in today's *Globe and Mail*. One of the solutions is a labour council that will bring together the diverse groups in the bargaining process. The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour (Mr. MacGuigan) pointed to this as a major breakthrough in dealing with the problem. Obviously it is hardly enough to scratch the surface.

One of the people who has been most critical to the government approach to the problem has been the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey). He has been locked in debate with the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien), who has great responsibility in matters of labour relations in the public service. I quote from an article in *The Ottawa Journal* of October 11, 1974, by W. A. Wilson, as follows:

The new President of Treasury Board, Jean Chrétien, has said firmly and publicly that the government should not be the best employer in the country. This is a somewhat old fashioned view which has respectable antecedents but which is probably much less generally accepted than it would have been 25 years ago.

● (2010)

The new Postmaster General, Bryce Mackasey, facing the challenge of bringing to an end a long period of internal strife and deteriorating service in the Post Office is firm in his view that all things considered the government must be the country's best employer.

"The government can hardly go around . . . telling private enterprise that they must be good employers if they're not the best employers themselves," Mackasey said in a recent television appearance. Chrétien's contrary view was expressed with equal firmness in a radio broadcast last weekend.

Here is a problem right in the bosom of the cabinet, and it will have to be resolved if we are to come to grips with the breakdown in the collective bargaining process in the public service. The situation at the moment is best described as an adversary system where the union leader becomes the organizer of discontent rather than one who helps bring about a consensus.

There has been a deterioration in the public service since 1967 partly because of the frustration created by the attitude of Treasury Board. I have several clippings from the *Globe and Mail* which relate to this aspect, and one of them is dated April 23, 1975. It reads:

William Ladyman, a Winnipeg employee relations consultant, says the federal Treasury Board may create "absolute anarchy" in the

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public service if it continues to act as bargaining agent for the federal government.

Mr. Ladyman, formerly an international vice-president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and now a consultant . . . says the Treasury Board's ineptness and "plain stupidity" have precipitated most recent strikes by various groups of federal employees.

Unfortunately we are now confronted with a situation where the attitude is "strike first and negotiate later". One of the reasons for our present difficulties may be that the system which has been applied to the public service was developed in the private sector and does not fit four square into the public sector. Those of us who have been active in the committee which is considering the Finkelman Report, for example, have discovered that there really is not a bargaining team which meets all the requirements of an adequate collective bargaining process. Management and labour do not, in fact, confront one another. Other weaknesses were discovered—failure to deal with grievances, failure to use the pay research bureau to establish comparable rates outside the service, an inability to deal with illegal strikes, and so on.

One of the witnesses who appeared before us was a representative of a public service union. He pointed out that most of the employees who go out on an illegal strike feel a deep sense of guilt if they are given a two-dollar parking ticket. Yet their attitude is such that they blithely go out on an illegal strike and seriously disrupt the economy in Canada. The only solution offered by the government so far has been to ask parliament to pass *ad hoc* back-to-work legislation—not a rewarding course to take in the long term. Obviously, though legislation is not the complete solution, the law will have to be brought up to date; present circumstances demand nothing less.

May I refer now to the Post Office and what is happening there. The Postmaster General has been recognized as one of the more progressive members of the government in the area I have outlined. The Post Office itself is one of the more visible arms of the public service. Unfortunately, it has been neglected for some 80 years.

Members of the Letter Carriers' Union voted 81 per cent to ratify the agreement which was reached with them a short while ago. It was a fair settlement. Let me quote from the *Courier*, the official news voice of the Letter Carriers' Union of Canada—this is the edition of March-April when they were getting set to strike:

We will probably be in a legal strike position when this issue of the *Courier* reaches you. Several months ago each local received an L. C. U. C. strike manual explaining how to organize for this period. By now, your strike committee should be well organized, your picket captains appointed and your picket rosters brought up to date. All your strike machinery should be well oiled and ready to move if the employer forces us to use our strike mandate.

Well! Fortunately, it did not go in that direction because a spirit of goodwill and good faith was introduced into the negotiations, with the happy result I have mentioned.

Now the government is engaged in critical negotiations with the Union of Postal Workers. One of the fundamental issues is the issue of automation. This will be a real test of the government as represented by the Treasury Board, the postal officials and the Postmaster General, in bringing about the new spirit which is required if we are to see a happier situation in the collective bargaining process in the public service.